

The Catastrophe at Frankenhausen.

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lured his misguided followers to their doom in thousands.

" Strike, strike, strike!" cried the terrible fanatic. " Do not let yourselves be moved to pity even though Esau should speak fair words to you. Regard not the lamentation of the godless." " Strike, strike, strike," he reiterated, " while the iron is hot. Keep your swords warm with the blood of tyrants. Strike, strike, strike. God goes before you. It is the Lord's battle, not yours. It is not you who are fighting. Therefore strike with God's help." Frenzy like this could not supply the place of drill and organisation, as " Thomas Miinzer with the sword of Gideon" learned to his cost shortly after at Frankenhausen. Here on the 20th May Thomas took post with eight thousand of his dupes to defy the united army of the Landgrave of Hesse, Duke George of Saxony, and Duke Henry of Brunswick, which was about the same strength. With fanatic confidence these ill-armed and ill-disciplined peasants awaited the onset, while Munzer bade them look at the rainbow above as a sign of God's presence. In this deluded spirit they refused to listen to those who counselled submission on the promise of amnesty. Munzer bade them remember Gideon and David, and had two of the opposition, a nobleman and a priest, decapitated on the spot. The rabble behind the barricade of waggons joined in the hymn, " Nun bitten wir den Heiligen Geist" ("Now we beseech the Holy Ghost"), and looked upwards for the army of angels to rend the heavens and

descend to
their help. Whilst thus engaged the landgrave's
men-at-arms
came crash over the rustic stockade, and in a twinkling the army of God's elect was a horde of fugitives, among whom the spears and swords of trained soldiers did fearful execution. Thousands were shot, hacked, or speared. The streets of Frankenhausen, where many sought refuge, were soaked with blood. "We have taken Frankenhausen," wrote Landgraf Philip the following day, "stabbed to death all the male prisoners found there, and plundered the town, and with the help of God obtained a victory for which we have cause to be very thankful to the Almighty, and we hope in this to have accomplished a good work." It was a grim work at any rate, Graf Philip. Among the few prisoners spared was Munzer himself, who was caught in the loft where he had sought G VOL. II.